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Chile: Easing Internal Security Measures

President Pinochet's sense of timing, approach to questions of substance, and basic rigidity are characterized by last week's announcement that the state of siege is over (see chart). The move, which reveals Pinochet's appreciation that autarky in the face of international pressure is impossible, also shows that any relaxation in Chile will follow his own timetable. Pinochet's behavior is dictated by a predilection for making concessions when some advantage can be won or reacting obstinately when stung by what he considers unfair attacks on his regime.

CHILEAN INTERNAL SECURITY MEASURES

Stages of State of Siege

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| I. External or internal war   | Military tribunals authorized to try national security cases under time of war rules, that is, without civilian review.  |
| II. Internal defense          |  |
| III. Internal security        | Military tribunals authorized to try national security cases under time of peace rules with civilian review and less severe sentences, except for certain "political" offenses handled under time of war provisions. |
| IV. Simple internal commotion |  |

Stages of State of Emergency

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| I. Extraordinary authority                     | Reduction to the first stage of a state of emergency went into effect on 12 March 1978. |
| II. Emergency zones                            |   |
| III. Unification of regional military commands |   |

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Lifting the emergency restrictions seems intended to influence a new resolution on Chile under consideration by the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva and to counteract the damaging implications of the Letelier murder case. A secondary motivation is a more general improvement of Chile's image abroad for various security reasons. Sensitivity over the adverse repercussions of Chile's poor reputation has heightened because of troublesome territorial controversies with its neighbors and because of Chile's difficulty in finding arms suppliers.

In practical terms, the reduction to a state of emergency will have little effect on most Chileans. It will remove several of the government's powers, such as exile by executive fiat, detention without charge for more than five days, and arbitrary repeal of citizenship. Still, the government will have wide latitude to restrict trade union activity, political meetings, and free expression. A partial curfew will remain in effect at the discretion of local military commanders. A new national security code is being drafted, which is expected to leave substantial powers with the military in national security matters.

Pinochet has promised there would be no further trials of "a military nature." Until the complex patchwork of existing decrees is replaced by the new code, however, it is unclear where the lines of civil and military justice will be drawn.

The government has claimed publicly that the relaxation was possible because of the large measure of popular support expressed in the January referendum and the results of a new poll showing 80 percent of Chileans approving the regime. Additionally, the absence of an active subversive threat has been mentioned as a factor.

The Chilean President has been unwilling to be pushed beyond certain limits. He believes the criticisms of the human rights situation in Chile are the enemy's propaganda machine at work, and these attacks sometimes elicit irrational rage from Pinochet. He reacts by digging in his heels to prove his regime impervious to the propaganda assault. For example, Pinochet had considered lifting the state of siege at the time of the government's

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fourth anniversary last September, but he postponed the move to avoid seeming to bow to international pressure. He had visited Washington days earlier for the signing of the Panama Canal treaties and did not want to give the impression that he was taking orders from the United States. Moreover, Pinochet's decision in August to overhaul the national intelligence organization was already perceived by him to be a major concession to human rights critics.

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